

## **From Strong Communities Come Resilient Families: Strengthening Child Welfare and Early Childhood Collaborations Through FFPSA and Beyond Next Steps to Build Collaboration**

Ensuring the unique developmental needs of young children in families involved in or at risk of involvement in the child welfare system are met will require amplifying family voice in the development of equitable policies and implementation of effective practices, sustained coordination to align goals and desired outcomes, and effective communication to reduce stigma and build protective factors.

On May 20, 2020, more than 60 stakeholders collaborated to discuss solutions to strengthen families and communities. A summary of this feedback may be found [here](#). Ongoing collaboration and authentic engagement of families with lived experiences in the development of policies will be accomplished by initiating the following next steps.

### Parent Involvement

- Increase parent representation on the Oklahoma Partnership for School Readiness Board. The Governor has the responsibility to appoint two parents of young children as required in state statute to serve on the board. Ten additional positions are appointed by individuals at the discretion of the Governor and vacancies currently exist on the board. OPSR and DHS will jointly request Governor Stitt to appoint two additional parents of a child under the age of eight who has experienced involvement in the child welfare system to serve on the board.
- Create an early childhood parent advisory committee under the auspices of the OPSR, and ensure that at least 4 parents who have been involved in the child welfare system serve on this committee. The charge of this committee will be to guide the development of equitable policies to ensure the diverse needs of families with young children are met.

### Coordination

- Child Welfare Services will involve representatives from child care, Head Start/Early Head Start, public school Pre-K, home-based family support programs, child health, early childhood mental health representatives and other early childhood experts in the development of the Family First Prevention Services Plan to ensure alignment with the OKFutures Strategic Plan.
- Child Welfare program staff will participate in workgroups charged with the implementation of the OKFutures Strategic Plan to ensure the needs of diverse families with young children involved in the child welfare system are adequately met.
- A system of coordinated enrollment will be established within communities to provide a continuum of care for families who are involved and at risk of involvement in the child welfare system with strategies designed to build protective factors and strengthen families. Strategies focused on Oklahoma's most vulnerable families in the OKFutures Strategic Plan include piloting contracts with rural child care centers focused on infants and toddlers, piloting community-based preschool programs for 3-year-olds, leveraging Medicaid to support enhanced developmental and behavioral support of embedded primary care, and prioritizing children with disabilities, children involved in the child

welfare system, and children experiencing homelessness. This plan prioritizes strategies that address the barriers Oklahoma's most vulnerable families face and reflects our recognition that raising strong, healthy children is the key to a brighter future for all Oklahoma families.

#### Communication

- OPSR, DHS and the early childhood parent advisory committee will jointly implement strategies that engage trusted messengers to support consistent messages that increase families' knowledge and ability to make informed decisions about their children's development.